

**Washington Health Benefit Exchange Board
Annual Retreat Day 1
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, July 26, 2023
1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Cedarbrook Lodge, Lily Conference Room, Seattle WA
Teleconference and Webinar**

Board Members Present:

Ron Sims, Chair
Mabel Bodell, MD
Don Conant
April E. Lynne
Maureen McLaughlin
Hiroshi Nakano

John Schapman
David Frockt
Commissioner Mike Kreidler, Ex-Officio
Mich'l Needham, *on behalf of Director Sue Birch, Ex-Officio*

Guests:

Andrew Cline, Facilitator
Kevin Patterson, CEO, Connect for Health
Colorado
Seciah Aquino from the Latino Coalition for
a Healthy California

Gabrielle Lessard from the National
Immigration Law Center, California
Rene Mollow, Deputy Director of Health
Care Benefits & Eligibility, California
Department of Health Care Services

Washington Health Benefit Exchange (WAHBE) Staff Present:

Ingrid Ulrey, Chief Executive Officer
Jim Crawford, Chief Financial Officer
Leah Hole-Marshall, General Counsel &
Chief Strategist
Carla Reyes, Chief Operating Officer

David Sorrell, Chief Information Officer
Wynne McHale, Chief of Staff
Michele McGehee, Interim Chief Marketing Officer
Carly Christiansen, Senior Program Specialist

Welcome and Warm Up – Don Conant, Acting Chair; Andrew Cline Facilitator

Acting Chair Don Conant called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m.

Andrew Cline led Board Members through a warm-up exercise and reviewed the agenda for the day.

CEO Report – Ingrid Ulrey, Chief Executive Officer

Ingrid Ulrey reported on the state of the Exchange and her first 90 days as Chief Executive Officer noting the organization is strong and delivering on its core mission. Ingrid highlighted some of the areas she has focused on including staff, culture, the *Healthplanfinder* platform, and the establishment and prioritization of biennial goals.

Ingrid also spoke to her focus on three key initiatives that are the focus of recent Exchange work: preventing coverage gaps during Medicaid redeterminations, driving affordability and value through Cascade Care tools, and preparing for the launch of immigrant health care coverage.

Ingrid also walked through some of the key areas of engagement for the Exchange in relation to strengthening the *Healthplanfinder* platform. Ingrid noted that the Health and Human Services (HHS) Coalition and the Health Care Cost Transparency Board (HCCTB) were where agencies are able to partner and work together towards common goals.

Immigrant Health Coverage – Wynne McHale, Chief of Staff; Kevin Patterson, CEO, Connect for Health Colorado; Seciah Aquino from the Latino Coalition for a Healthy California; Gabrielle Lessard from the National Immigration Law Center, California; Rene Mollow, Deputy Director of Health Care Benefits & Eligibility, California Department of Health Care Services

Wynne McHale began by reminding Board Members that the Exchange is preparing to provide coverage to all Washingtonians, regardless of immigration status. Wynne noted that qualified health and dental plans (QHPs and QDPs) would be available for this population starting November 1st and that the Exchange was also engaged in the implementation of the expansion of Washington Apple Health coverage, which is planned to begin July 2024. Wynne reported that the Exchange has been working to prepare for the launch of immigrant health care coverage which focuses on both the technical and outreach aspects, adding that with support from the legislature the Exchange has conducted a significant amount of engagement to learn and engage with these new populations.

Wynne introduced the first panelist Kevin Patterson, CEO, Connect for Health Colorado; Seciah Aquino from the Latino Coalition for a Healthy California. Kevin Patterson walked through the Colorado Exchange's goals for immigrant health coverage and highlighted how their program worked similar to their re-insurance program, with revenue collected via a fee assessed on health insurers and hospitals. Kevin noted that those who are up to 150% of the federal poverty level (FPL), are eligible for enhanced savings. Kevin spoke to the Colorado Exchange's outreach strategy, noting work began nearly a year in advance of implementation.

Kevin spoke to how the program implemented went noting CO reached the cap of about 10,000 customers enrolled in early December. Kevin added that trusted community partners played an essential role with most customers using assistance to become enrolled. Kevin noted that he underestimated how successful the program was, and was glad they had partnered with community partners to deliver messaging instead of trying to be the trusted messenger.

Wynne introduced the two remaining panelists: Seciah Aquino from the Latino Coalition for a Healthy California; Gabrielle Lessard from the National Immigration Law Center, California; Rene Mollow, Deputy Director of Health Care Benefits & Eligibility, California Department of Health Care Services. Wynne noted that California had taken a different approach to implementing health care coverage for immigrant populations and asked them to expand on their efforts to expand their state's Medicaid coverage program to undocumented Californians.

Rene Mollow noted that California had policies in place to cover immigrant populations through funding at the state level, even after the federal government had removed the population from eligibility for federal assistance at the federal level. Rene noted that California began by covering those within the immigrant population up to 19 years old, then moved to covering those 19 to 26 years old. While there was early interest and advocacy for next moving to cover all Californians, regardless of immigration status, the financial investment was too large. In May California continued with their incremental approach by expanding coverage to those who are 50 or older. Rene added that the final group, those 26 to 49 years old, would be eligible for coverage starting in January 2024.

Rene highlighted some of the outreach and partnership that took place to help educate customers on changes, help to manage transitions, and facilitate ongoing enrollment. Similar to Colorado, Rene noted that outreach work began early – nearly a year in advance of each phase.

Wynne highlighted some of the emerging themes: to start early, engage community, and navigators and enrollment assistors are key in helping customers enroll and discuss data privacy concerns. Wynn invited Gabrielle Lessard and Seciah Aquino to talk more about California's expansion efforts. Gabrielle Lessard noted the California Exchange does a very good job of incorporating advocates and community partners into its programs. Gabrielle spoke to how advocates worked to provide input on approach, applications, etc. and emphasized how important trusted community advisors were in getting people enrolled. Seciah Aquino spoke to the need for iteration and continued partnership to continue to meet populations where they are and reiterated the importance of working with trusted organizations within immigrant populations to deliver messaging and receive feedback.

Strategic Plan & Equity Statement – Ingrid Ulrey, Chief Executive Officer; Leah Hole-Marshall, General Counsel & Chief Strategist

Leah Hole-Marshall reviewed the Exchange's Mission and Objectives and reminded Board Members of the changes the Board took on the strategic plan in the previous year, especially in regards to the Exchange's role as steward of the marketing place. Leah noted the Strategic Plan is included in the Exchange's annual report to the legislature. Board Members expressed appreciation the opportunity to revisit the Strategic Plan and believed it to be adequate at this time.

Ingrid Ulrey reminded Board Members of the history of the Exchange's Equity Statement, which was implemented in 2018 with the help of Board Member Ben Danielson and the Exchange's Health Equity Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Ingrid noted that at the time the statement was seen as cutting edge and is a guide for staff, who are proud of it. Ingrid noted that as the statement was now five years old, a refresh of the statement was proposed to keep the statement fresh and in line with current thinking. Ingrid tasked the Exchange's equity consultant, Paj Nandi, with the firm Upstream Consulting, to assist in the effort to refresh the statement. Proposed changes were shared with the Health Equity TAC, which approved revising the statement and provided feedback. Changes were also shared with the Board's Retreat Planning Committee, who provided input on the version Ingrid was sharing with the Board today.

Ingrid noted the addition of three themes: the move to more explicitly calling out racism, intersectionality and the compounding effect of racism in addition to other biases, and accountability to listening to community and taking action to address inequities as we are able.

The Board noted the work that Ben Danielson and the Health Equity TAC did to create the original statement and expressed appreciation for their efforts and expressed appreciation for taking the update back to the Health Equity TAC. Board Members noted the update retains its original eloquence and while incorporating new points. The Board discussed the concepts of power and accountability within the statement.

Don Conant motioned to adopt the updated Equity Statement, as presented. Ron Sims seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ingrid provided insight into the Exchange's strategic process and highlighted the work underway to take the Board's Strategic Plan and make a clear and actionable plan for staff to implement. Ingrid presented a draft of Exchange goals for 2023-2025, which would help direct priorities and decisions.

Public Comment

Ron Sims called for public comment. No public comment was provided.

Board Self Evaluation – Andrew Cline, Facilitator

Andrew Cline presented the Exchange Board's responses to their recent self evaluation. Andrew noted this survey had been in place for several years now, which helps to provide structure to have conversations about the Board's effectiveness, and its direction. Andrew also noted that if there is a need to revisit the questions, he encouraged the Board to do so. Andrew highlighted some areas, such as the Mission and Vision, for the Board to review now and in the future.

Board Members discussed the need to capture their work on the efforts to select a new Chief Executive Officer, as well as the continued importance of the Exchange's technical advisory committees. Board Members. Board Members also expressed the desire to return to more in person meetings in order to allow for more opportunity to interact and work together, as well as utilizing technology to create space for discussions when in-person does not always work for all.

Wrap-Up - Andrew Cline, Facilitator

Andrew Cline reviewed the next day's agenda then invited Board Member to reflect on the day and share a take-away.

Adjournment

Don Conant adjourned the meeting at 5:00 p.m.